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POWELL SAYS U.S. EFFORT ON TSUNAMI RELIEF REFLECTS U.S. VALUES

Continues tour of stricken region as creditor countries broach debt relief

Washington -- U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell says the sight of U.S. troops delivering emergency supplies to countries stricken by a tsunami should reinforce the U.S. value of putting people first regardless of religion.

Powell made the remarks in a January 4 interview in Jakarta on his stop in Indonesia during a tour of countries still struggling desperately following the December 26, 2004, disaster. See related article at <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=January&x=20050104162420mgeloot0.6153528&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>.)

"It does give the Muslim world and the rest of the world an opportunity to see American generosity, American values in action, where we care about the dignity of every individual and the worth of every individual, and our need to respond to the needs of every individual of whatever faith," Powell said. "America is not an anti-Islam, anti-Muslim nation."

The secretary said he was aware of difficulties Indonesia faced in securing relief for tsunami survivors because of lack of helicopters and other equipment. He said he would consider Indonesia's request to lift the U.S. embargo on sales of military equipment imposed after the 1999 violence in East Timor.

"I'm well aware of the transport difficulties that the government has with some of their aircraft, and some of the laws that I am bound by, and the Minister did raise it with me and I told him I would look into it immediately and see what could be done," Powell said. "That's all I will say now."

In Jakarta Secretary Powell was looking ahead to a January 6 international meeting the Indonesians are organizing to get a better grasp of the different needs of each country in the region.

"I am sure that some nations will come with additional pledges," Powell said, "but I think what we really want to do is to make sure that the money that has been pledged and the resources that are on the way are properly and appropriately distributed to deal with the need."

Earlier on January 4 in Bangkok, Powell talked about cooperating with Thailand and other countries in the region by providing technical expertise on installing an early warning system in the Indian Ocean to alert people of a future tsunami.

More immediately, he said, the United States can help Thailand with reconnaissance support to look for bodies, forensic support to identify bodies and support to restore damage to the land.

Powell also said that the amount of U.S. government spending in disaster relief would be much higher than the \$350 million pledged by the Bush administration because of the additional money being spent by the Defense Department delivering emergency supplies.

According to the Defense Department, approximately 13,000 U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force and Coast Guard personnel are involved in the relief efforts. Since relief operations began the military has flown 404 missions delivering 316,664 pounds of water, 135,102 pounds of food, and 8,246 pounds of medical supplies. See related article at <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=January&x=20050104115004dmslahrellek0.7558405&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>.

At a January 4 Defense Department briefing at the Pentagon, the U.S. commander of forces in the Pacific said the United States intends to double the number of helicopters available for delivering emergency supplies in the stricken region. See related article at <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=January&x=20050104115004dmslahrellek0.7558405&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>.

[gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=January&x=20050104180345frllehctim0.151684&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=January&x=20050104180345frllehctim0.151684&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html).

Meanwhile, at the United Nations, Jan Egeland, U.N. emergency relief coordinator, rebutted criticism that member states responded with offers of help to little or too late.

"I respectfully disagree with those who say that the U.S. was slow in this," Egeland said. "The U.S. could not have been more pro-active or active, from the U.N. point of view, in this disaster."

By some estimates 150,000 people in 12 countries around the Indian Ocean died in the tsunami and millions were left homeless.

In another development, the United Kingdom finance minister has said that he will be pressing wealthy countries, with U.S. support, to impose a moratorium on official foreign debt repayments by the countries hit by the tsunami.

According to published reports, U.K. Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown said that, after getting support from U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow, he would work to arrange the deal by a January 12 meeting of the Paris Club group of creditor countries.

The U.S. Treasury Department had not yet issued a statement at press time.

For additional information go to "U.S. Response to Tsunami and Earthquake in Asia" at: http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/south_asia/tsunamis.html

NEW JOURNAL EXAMINES U.S. MILITARY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

"Improving Lives: Military Humanitarian and Assistance Programs"

Given the ongoing U.S. military humanitarian relief efforts in the earthquake and tsunami stricken region of the Indian Ocean, the Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) is pleased to again offer its recent eJournal USA, "Improving Lives:

Military Humanitarian and Assistance Programs” to help provide background and perspective.

This electronic journal describes the little-told story of the humanitarian assistance and military training programs the U.S. armed forces provide for countries around the world. These activities strengthen national and regional security interests; promote democracy and civil authority over militaries; foster human rights and open-market economies; and provide medical, educational, disaster-relief, and other kinds of aid.

The Department of Defense, in cooperation with the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development, funds many of these programs.

The publication can be viewed at the following address: <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/ipts/1104/ijpe/ijpe1104.html>

IRAQIS TAKE CHARGE OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTORAL PROCESS

Hundreds of groups organize to participate in political process

By David Shelby
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington - The preparations for the January 30 Iraqi legislative elections differ from early democratic experiences in other transitional countries in that the process in Iraq is entirely managed and controlled by Iraqi officials, according to National Democratic Institute (NDI) President Kenneth Wollack.

“This is an election that is not being run by the United Nations, it’s not being run by the OSCE. It’s unlike Cambodia, unlike Bosnia, unlike East Timor, unlike Mozambique. This is an election that is being run by Iraqi election authorities with some technical advice from the international community,” Wollack told reporters at a January 3 briefing in Washington.

NDI and its sister organization, the International Republican Institute (IRI), are two of the lead organizations providing technical advice and training to Iraqi election officials, political parties and civic organizations.

NDI and IRI conduct seminars and training exercises drawing on the experience and expertise of political and civic leaders from countries that have recently undergone transitions to democracy in order to encourage an informed discussion about the creation of democratic institutions.

“What all this effort has been is to try to share these international experiences and expertise, but ultimately it will be Iraqis that run it, the Iraqis that will participate in it and the Iraqis who will guarantee the integrity of the process, and it will be the Iraqis who will judge the legitimacy of the institutions that emerge from the elections,” Wollack said.

Both Wollack and IRI Executive Vice President Judy Van Rest commented on the importance of broad participation in the upcoming elections, saying that the involvement of numerous political parties and civic organizations gives the people a sense of ownership of the political process and a stake in the government.

Wollack said the purpose of NDI and IRI is not to provide instructions on how a democracy should work but rather to create forums for people to share their experiences in organizing groups within a democratic system.

“We do very little promoting of democracy, but rather, supporting those in other countries who are trying to make a transition to more open, pluralistic political systems,” he said.

NDI and IRI provide training in political party organization, coalition-building, campaigning, voter education and communication with constituents.

Both Wollack and Van Rest said that the purpose of their work is not to support a single election but to support the creation of a long-term political process.

“We have no interest in the outcome of this election. Those are issues that the Iraqi people must decide. We are interested in a process and interested in the long-term development -- both economic and political -- of Iraq,” Wollack said.

Van Rest noted that more than 200 political parties and hundreds of civic organizations have been formed in Iraq, and Wollack said that these groups would be active in the Iraqi political process long after the January 30

elections. He said it is important for them to learn organization, communication and leadership skills.

“That’s one wonderful thing about elections. It’s not only electing your leaders, but it’s also about providing an environment in which people can participate and organize,” he said.

Van Rest said that with the lifting of the dictatorship in Iraq, there has been a proliferation of political parties, civic organizations and ideas, and he added that this has been an encouraging development.

“Many people said, well, the Iraqis are going to search for a strongman,” he said, but he said that the proliferation of these groups has demonstrated “that when given an opportunity the Iraqis want to have the same thing that everyone else wants to have around the world -- they want a pluralistic political process.”

U.S. SENATE, BUSH CABINET WILL WELCOME NEW HISPANIC MEMBERS

Officials reflect demographic group’s rising political clout

By Lauren Monsen
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- When new members of the U.S. Senate and President Bush’s second-term Cabinet are sworn into office in January, they will include four prominent Hispanic Americans who demonstrate the rising political fortunes -- and aspirations -- of the fastest-growing demographic group in the United States.

Ken Salazar (Democrat of Colorado) and Mel Martinez (Republican of Florida) were elected to the Senate in November 2004. In addition, President Bush recently named White House legal counsel Alberto Gonzales to succeed outgoing Attorney General John Ashcroft, and nominated Carlos Gutierrez, chief executive officer of the Kellogg Corporation, to become the next secretary of commerce.

All four men rose from modest origins to establish flourishing careers in public service, law, or business -- and each one, in his way, offers an interpretation of the classic American success story.

Salazar, a fifth-generation Coloradoan, is of Mexican descent. Born to a family of farmers and ranchers, he has long been familiar with issues related to land management and water conservation -- valuable preparation for his subsequent role as an official in Colorado’s state government.

Bilingual from early childhood, Salazar has been a farmer and rancher in Colorado’s San Luis Valley, a natural-resources lawyer, and a small-business owner much of his life. He graduated from Colorado College in 1977 with a degree in political science, and earned a law degree in 1981 from the University of Michigan.

In addition to ranching, Salazar and his wife have owned radio stations in Pueblo and Denver, and own and operate an ice-cream store in Westminster, Colorado. Salazar has served as chief legal counsel to Colorado’s governor, as executive director of the state’s department of natural resources, and as chairman of the Rio Grande Compact Commission.

His experience gave him first-hand knowledge of the problems faced by Colorado’s ranching and business sectors, and earned him the respect of many rural voters who have traditionally supported Republican candidates. Salazar launched his bid for a U.S. Senate seat while serving as Colorado’s attorney general, running against multi-millionaire beer executive Pete Coors. Despite Coors’ well-financed campaign, Salazar’s popularity in Colorado helped ensure his election victory over his Republican rival.

Florida’s new senator also has a dramatic personal story. Martinez was born in Sagua La Grande, Cuba, and arrived in the United States in 1962 under the auspices of a Roman Catholic humanitarian effort called Operation Peter Pan, which brought more than 14,000 children into the country. Catholic charitable groups provided Martinez a home at two youth facilities; at the time, he was alone and spoke virtually no English. He subsequently lived with two foster families, and to this day, he retains close ties to them. In 1966 he was reunited with his own family in Orlando.

Martinez graduated from Florida State University's College of Law in 1973. During his 25 years of law practice in Orlando, he was involved in various civic organizations, and was vice president of the Board of Catholic Charities of the Orlando Diocese. Running as a Republican, he was elected chairman of Orange County, Florida, and served on the Governor's Growth Management Study Commission. He had previously served as president of the Orlando Utilities Commission, on the board of directors of a community bank, and as chairman of the Orlando Housing Authority.

He served as co-chairman of President Bush's 2000 campaign in Florida, and was appointed as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development during Bush's first term in the White House.

Securing the Republican nomination as a candidate for the U.S. Senate seat of retiring Democrat Bob Graham, Martinez defeated his Democratic opponent, Betty Castor, in a very close and bitterly contested election. According to analysts, Martinez's Cuban background and his popularity in the Orlando region both contributed to his appeal to the statewide Republican Party in Florida. When he takes office, he will become the first U.S. senator of Cuban heritage.

Martinez has already won positions on three prized Senate committees -- Foreign Relations, Banking, and Energy. He will also serve on the Senate Special Committee on Aging -- an important post for a legislator from Florida, a state with a large number of retirees among its residents.

The new Hispanic appointees to the president's second-term Cabinet also have impressive credentials. Gonzales, nominated to head the Department of Justice as the next attorney general, was born in San Antonio, Texas, and raised in Houston. He is a graduate of Texas public schools, Rice University, and Harvard Law School.

Gonzales served in the U.S. Air Force between 1973-1975, and attended the U.S. Air Force Academy between 1975-1977. In 1982, he joined the law firm of Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. in Houston, and subsequently became a partner in the firm.

For three years, Gonzales was general counsel to then-Governor George W. Bush of Texas, and he served as Texas' secretary of state from December 2, 1997, to January 10, 1999. He was appointed to the Texas Supreme Court in 1999, before being commissioned as counsel to

the president in January 2001. Gonzales has served the Bush White House in that position ever since.

In his former capacity as Texas' secretary of state, Gonzales acted as the governor's lead liaison on Mexico and border issues, among other duties. He was elected to the American Law Institute in 1999, and served as a board trustee of the Texas Bar Foundation from 1996-1999. Prior to that, Gonzales was board director for the State Bar of Texas from 1991-1994, and was president of the Houston Hispanic Bar Association from 1990-1991.

Gonzales was inducted into the Hispanic Scholarship Fund Alumni Hall of Fame in 2003, was presented with the Good Neighbor Award from the U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce, and garnered President's Awards from the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the League of United Latin American Citizens.

In nominating Gonzales to his Cabinet shortly after winning a second term as president, Bush said: "He always gives me his frank opinion; he is a calm and steady voice in times of crisis. He has an unwavering principle of respect for the law."

If confirmed as attorney general, Gonzales will be the first Hispanic American to hold the position.

The appointment of Cuban-born businessman Carlos Gutierrez as secretary of commerce is another tale of immigrant success. As he introduced Gutierrez to reporters at a formal White House ceremony, Bush praised him as "one of America's most respected business leaders," a man who has made his mark at the Kellogg Company, where he presides as chief executive officer. Gutierrez began his association with Kellogg early in life, and his talents allowed him to rise through the ranks rapidly, Bush explained.

"Carlos's family came to America from Cuba when he was a boy," Bush said. "He learned English from a bellhop in a Miami hotel, and later became an American citizen. When his family eventually settled in Mexico City, Carlos took his first job for Kellogg as a truck driver, delivering Frosted Flakes [cereal] to local stores."

"Ten years after he started, he was running the Mexican business. And 15 years after that, he was running the entire company," according to Bush. "At every stage of this remarkable story, Carlos motivated others with his energy and optimism and impressed others with his decency."

Bush predicted that “the Department of Commerce will have an experienced manager and an innovative leader” in Gutierrez.

For his part, Gutierrez declared himself “humbled” and “honored” by his selection as commerce secretary. “Mr. President, I believe passionately in your vision of a 21st century where America is the best country in the world with which to do business,” he told Bush. “I believe in your call for a vibrant, growing entrepreneurial society, where everyone has the opportunity to experience the joy and the pride of ownership, where everyone can contribute, and where everyone can benefit.”

Gutierrez also spoke of his metamorphosis from struggling immigrant to top executive at a giant U.S. corporation, and the hard work that made it possible. “I left Cuba to come to this great country in 1960 as a political refugee,” he recalled. “I left with my parents and my brother, and we started, essentially, from scratch at that time.”

The elevation of Salazar, Martinez, Gonzales and Gutierrez to the highest echelons of government service can be regarded not only as a testament to individual ability and determination, but also to the inclusive spirit of U.S. society in the 21st century. Hispanic Americans are emerging as a considerable force in the United States -- and the top ranks of the U.S. government now reflect this fact, a development that political analysts had long predicted.

ROVERS PASS FIRST ANNIVERSARY ON MARS SURFACE

Surface vehicles still exploring, surpassing expectations

One year has passed since the rover vehicles Spirit and Opportunity touched down on the surface of Mars, allowing U.S. space scientists to celebrate an anniversary they never expected.

The vehicles were expected to remain viable, operative and returning data to NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) through April 2004. But -- eight months after their anticipated demise -- they continue to explore and return data to Earth.

“The twins sailed through the worst of the Martian winter with flying colors, and spring is coming,” said JPL’s Jim Erickson, rover project manager. “Both rovers are in strong positions to continue exploring, but we can’t give you any guarantees.”

Opportunity is cruising the Martian surface for another look at the heat shield that protected it during descent. Team members are hoping to learn something about better ways to land such vehicles in the future.

Spirit is exploring another part of the Martian landscape inspecting a type of rock different from anything previously seen on the planet.

The key science finding of the mission was that liquid water was present on the Martian surface at one time, suggesting that the conditions for the emergence of life were in place.

Full details of the mission are available at <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/>

The text of the JPL news release follows:

NASA
Jet Propulsion Laboratory
California Institute of Technology

NASA Rovers’ Adventures on Mars Continue
January 03, 2005

NASA lit a birthday candle today for its twin Mars Exploration Rovers, Spirit and Opportunity. The Spirit rover begins its second year on Mars investigating puzzling rocks unlike any found earlier.

The rovers successfully completed their three-month primary missions in April. They astound even their designers with how well they continue operating. The unanticipated longevity is allowing both rovers to reach additional destinations and to keep making discoveries. Spirit landed on Jan. 3 and Opportunity Jan. 24, 2004, respectively.

“You could have cut the tension here with a knife the night Spirit landed,” said NASA Administrator Sean O’Keefe. “Just remembering the uncertainty involved with the landing emphasizes how exciting it is for all of us, since the rovers are still actively exploring. The rovers created an amazing amount of public interest and

have certainly helped advance the Vision for Space Exploration,” he said. The twin Mars explorers have drawn the most hits to NASA Web sites - - more than 9 billion in 2004.

Dr. Charles Elachi, director of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif., said, “Little did we know a year ago that we’d be celebrating a year of roving on Mars. The success of both rovers is tribute to hundreds of talented men and women who have put their knowledge and labor into this team effort.”

“The rovers are both in amazingly good shape for their age,” said JPL’s Jim Erickson, rover project manager. “The twins sailed through the worst of the Martian winter with flying colors, and spring is coming. Both rovers are in strong positions to continue exploring, but we can’t give you any guarantees.”

Opportunity is driving toward the heat shield that protected it during descent through the Martian atmosphere. Rover team members hope to determine how deeply the atmospheric friction charred the protective layer. “With luck, our observations may help to improve our ability to deliver future vehicles to the surface of other planets,” Erickson said.

Spirit is exploring the Columbia Hills within the Gusev Crater. “In December, we discovered a completely new type of rock in Columbia Hills, unlike anything seen before on Mars,” said Dr. Steve Squyres of Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., principal investigator for the rovers’ science payloads.

Jumbled textures of specimens dubbed “Wishstone” and “Wishing Well” look like the product of an explosion, perhaps from a volcano or a meteor impact. These rocks are much richer in phosphorus than any other known Mars rocks. “Some ways of making phosphates involve water; others do not,” Squyres said. “We want to look at more of these rocks to see if we can distinguish between those possible histories.”

NASA’s next Mars mission, the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, is due to launch in August. “As great as the past year has been, Mars launch opportunities come along like clockwork every 26 months,” said Dr. Firouz Naderi of JPL, manager of NASA’s Mars Exploration Program. “At every one of them in the foreseeable future, we intend to go to Mars, building upon the findings by the rovers.”

NASA Chief Scientist Dr. Jim Garvin said, “Mars lures us to explore its mysteries. It is the most Earth-like of our sister planets, and many believe it may hold clues to whether life ever existed or even originated beyond Earth. The rovers have shown us Mars had persistently wet, possibly life-sustaining environments. Beyond their own profound discoveries, the rovers have advanced our step-by-step program for examining Mars. We will continue to explore Mars robotically, and eventually with human explorers.”

Images and additional information about the rovers and their discoveries are available on the Internet at http://www.nasa.gov/vision/universe/solarsystem/mer_main.html and <http://marsrovers.jpl.nasa.gov/home/index.html>.

JPL has managed the Mars Exploration Rover project since it began in 2000. JPL is a division of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena.